DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 541 IR 004 976

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TITLE Monkey See, Monkey Do.
PUB DATE 17 May 76
NOTE 10p.; Report submitted to the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, Montreal, Canada

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Children; *Crime; Futures (of Society); Modeling (Psychological); *Television; *Television Viewing; *Violence

ABSTRACT

The author cites empirical evidence and studies to support the thesis that television violence is not valuable as a sublimation for violence. Maintaining that television propaganda consists primarily of violence and mis-information about human behavior, and that children copy what they see, she concludes that television has taught people how to be violent and how to react to violence. She advocates swift measures to avert repercussions of exposure to this kind of propaganda, and the use of the medium to show people how to raise children and how to live with each other. (BBM)

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MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

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SUBMISSION

TO

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

May 17th, 1976

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TELEVISION AS SUBLIMATION FOR VIOLENCE

According to a 1975 Roper Poll, people are more interested in television than any other form of entertainment.[1] Everyone always agreed that t.v. was violent. The controversy over the effects of violence on television has been an open battle between science and business, and has centered on whether or not t.v. violence acted as a substitute or an incentive for violence. Network business people have argued as follows: If children and adults are allowed to experience their aggression through identification with television heroes, they will not have the need to express these feelings in real acts of aggression against one another or society. Television violence, therefore, should have acted as a good social outlet for aggressive feelings, particularly in children.

The amount of aggression that can be viewed at any hour of the day or night in Canada and the United States assures all people who watch television ample opportunity to drain off aggressiveness. Society could therefore have expected that there should have been a decrease in violence. Empirical evidence, statistics and important new studies have, however, disproved the myth of the value of television violence as a sublimation for violence and cathartic boon to society.

TELEVISION PROPAGANDA FOR VIOLENCE

Let me quote Leonard D. Eron, who states, "It is fair to say that all the major findings are consistent with the hypothesis that aggression may be learned by a child from his interaction with the environment. . . . Furthermore, parental punitiveness, especially physical punishment, serves to provide a model of aggressive behaviour for the child to emulate. Other models of aggression are furnished on the children's favorite television programs. . . . The most dramatic findings

relevant to identification (that is, modeling of behaviour) have to do with the television habits of the youngsters. As has been reported,[2] one of the best predictors of how aggressive a child will be at age nineteen is the violence content of television programs they prefer at age eight."[3]

The causes of violence and conflict are carried in the teachings of a society. Teaching is another name for propaganda. Television is a propaganda machine, a teaching machine. It is a very powerful tool. Where the propaganda of a population teaches kindness toward others, there is little or no violence and few conflicts occur. Where the propaganda is violent and teaches slavery, dominance and submission, winner and loser, there is much conflict. People fight to dominate and others fight to keep from being dominated.

I study violence and the effects of violence. Much of the violence in the home, school and society results from violent and incorrect information about others. At present, television propaganda consists primarily of violence and mis-information about human behaviour.

NOT ALL PEOPLE TEACH VIOLENCE

There are societies where men find no pleasure in dominating, hurting or killing one another or their neighbours, or the members of other societies, even though they possess the weapons to do so. The most significant common traits in these peaceful societies are that they all make very little distinction between the ideal characters of men and women, and have no ideal of brave, aggressive masculinity.[4]

No child in these societies grows up with the injunctions, "All real men do. . .", or "No proper woman does. . .", so that there is no confusion of sexual identity and therefore no cases of sexual inversion or child molestation have

been reported among them. The model for the growing child is of concrete performance and frank enjoyment. These people do not have heroes or martyrs to emulate, or cowards or traitors to despise. Their religious life lacks significant personalized gods and devils, and a happy, hard-working and productive life is within the reach of all.[5]

By contrast, North Americans have a very well-defined model of aggressive masculinity and so, in general, do all the peoples who prize the martial virtues and self-righteously kill their enemies or their "inferiors". If our heroes are killers, warriors, successful revolutionaries, and if masculinity is demonstrated by the willingness to give and take punishment, then the joy of killing is an important and necessary preoccupation among men.

During nine years of research, Gerbner[6] and Gross[7] video-taped and evaluated 924 plays and dramatic programs, 2,649 leading characters and 4,694 acts of episodes. In the world of television, half the people commit violence, a fifth perpetrate some crime, six percent kill someone and three percent are killed. The killers are young males, and the victims are young females and older males.

The propaganda backlash of television violence and aggression has only begun to be felt. Violence in the home, school and society is, however, so prevalent that it is almost out of hand.

MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

Albert Bandura,[8] perhaps more than any other person, in his study of television and children, clearly demonstrated the effect television propaganda has on behaviour. Bluntly, it is monkey see, monkey do. Bandura showed repeatedly that children copy what they see. He calls it modeling. In the study of child abuse, Bandura's concept has been verified beyond doubt. The most im-

portant aspect of child abuse is that the child grows up to repeat the same treatment it learned as a child at the hands of its parents, peers and the television. Bandura and his fellow researchers have been correct---example is the best teacher.

In forty-nine cultures studied by James W. Prescott, developmental neuropsychologist and health scientist administrator with the U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Prescott found that societies that provided infants with a great deal of physical affection (tender, loving care) are later characterized by relatively non-violent adults. The work of Prescott and many others now gives us a firmly-based principle: "Physically affectionate human societies are highly unlikely to be physically violent."[9] In addition, "Laboratory experiments with animals show that pleasure and violence have a reciprocal relationship; that is, the presence of one inhibits the other."[10,11]

TELEVISION SEX AND VIOLENCE

Serious crime continues at what is termed an intolerable rate all across North America. Today, life is approaching an ever-increasing resemblance to television drama. It is violent and dangerous.

Most adults have no idea about the real world of physical, emotional or sexual violence children and teenagers are forced to live with. Few adults leave the television set long enough to talk with one another, much less the young. The amount of violence in the home is greater by far than the violence recorded in any other category. In the United States, there are more police calls for family conflicts than for murder, aggravated batteries and all other serious crimes.[12] American homicides within the family account for one-fourth of all murders, and over one-half of them involve spouse killing spouse.[13] In Canada, in 1974, 36.3 percent of reported murders were of a domestic nature. Fifty-four (54)

husbands killed their wives, and thirteen (13) wives killed their husbands. In addition, twenty-nine (29) common-law husbands killed their common-law wives, and nine (9) common-law wives killed their common-law husbands.[14] In the U.S., twenty percent of the total number of police fatalities occur while responding to disturbance calls.[15]

Domestic violence in Canada and the United States far outweighs all other kinds of violence. Domestic violence usually means a beaten woman or child. One of the excuses that society has used for avoiding an examination of the battered woman is the titilating concept of a sado-masochistic sexual relationship between battering men and beaten women. Neither research or empirical evidence supports this belief.[16] Furthermore, we have good reason to believe that incest is a far greater occurrence in the Canadian home than we had previously suspected. Ninety-seven percent of the victims are female, and the average age is nine.

In addition, many little children are beaten, maimed and sometimes killed simply because they touch their genitals. Many little North American children are emotionally crippled and left sexually disturbed because of the ignorance of their parents and peers. IP Information about all aspects of child rearing is vital for North American families. Television can teach people what it means to be a human being. It can explain and teach normal behaviour, instead of teaching what is abnormal.

Television strongly stresses sex and violence, and the belief in man's right to strike woman. "Dames are simple", Humphrey Bogart is supposed to have said in one of his tough guy movie roles. "I never did see on that didn't understand a slap in the mouth."

A few years ago, a team of researchers received a shock when they had a man pretend to beat up a woman in full view of men witnesses. In six such fights

--real, so far as the witnesses knew--not once did a male bystander move a muscle to help the woman.

The male witnesses went to the aid of men being assaulted by other men, women being battered by other women, and even men being mauled by females. But when women were being beaten by men, people just watched.[17]

Television propaganda teaches that sex and violence go together. As a result, much sexual violence exists in the home and in the society. Because society has not allowed people to see or hear the truth about sex and pleasure, television drama based on sexual disease, violence and pain have filled the bill. Television is like the computer---garbage in, garbage out.

The present censorship restrictions prohibit the showing of real life. As a result, television has taught the young how to hate, rob, kill, maim and sexually abuse each other.

Without question, television has taught people and particularly the young, how to be violent and how to react to violence. The measures taken now will have to be swift if we are to avert the repercussions of the lessons the young have been taught. Television victims will increase unless measures are imposed to stop the present violent propaganda. Television, however, has only exposed the already existing problems within the culture, the educational system and the family. Television is not our scapegoat but our tool.

Television is a superb medium. It can set an example for people. It can show them how to raise children and how to live with each other. As Buckminster Fuller has said, anyone who is against technology is not a smart radish. If we are smart, we will use the communication system wisely and increase our chances of survival on this planet.

George Herbert Mead told us we must free the information. Information

is neutral; it belongs to all the people. When we allow television to give us all the information about human, animal and plant life on this planet, when we allow the television to help us understand the mysteries of life in the solar system, we will be using our communication system wisely.

The Bible tells us we shall be saved by the word. But we now know that the word may not only be verbal but visual.

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